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FM AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1440

INFO RUEHWH/WESTERN HEMISPHERIC AFFAIRS DIPL POSTS IMMEDIATE

RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID IMMEDIATE 0559

RUEHSG/AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO IMMEDIATE 0016

RHEHAAA/THE WHITE HOUSE WASHDC IMMEDIATE

RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC IMMEDIATE

RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE

RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC IMMEDIATE

RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE

RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC IMMEDIATE

RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORP WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE 1297

RHMFIISS/CDR JTF-BRAVO IMMEDIATE

RHMFIISS/CDR USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL IMMEDIATE

RHMFIISS/CDR USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL//CINC/POLAD// IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 TEGUCIGALPA 000019

SENSITIVE

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STATE FOR WHA/CEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/11/2020

TAGS: PGOV KDEM PREL PHUM HO

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR LLORENS MEETING WITH PRESIDENT ELECT

PEPE LOBO

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Classified By: Ambassador Hugo Llorens, reason 1.4 (b & d)

¶1. (S) Summary: The Ambassador met with President-elect Porfirio "Pepe" Lobo on the evening of January 9 to discuss a number of pending matters. The Ambassador briefed Lobo on our efforts to implement the Tegucigalpa-San Jose Accord, the results of Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary (PDAS) Craig Kelly's recent visit, and regime leader Roberto Micheletti's possible resignation. Lobo discussed the need to promote national reconciliation, his support for political amnesty legislation, and the status of President Zelaya. End summary.

¶2. (S) Implementation of Tegucigalpa-San Jose and Micheletti's Resignation: The Ambassador briefed Lobo on the results of the visit to Honduras of PDAS Craig Kelly (January 5-6). The Ambassador said that he and PDAS Kelly had urged Micheletti to step down as the best way to accommodate U.S. interest in upholding its foreign policy objectives and principles in Honduras, while giving Lobo maximum political space to restore ties with the international community, and ensuring a strong international presence at his inauguration.

The Ambassador told Lobo that in the meeting Micheletti had been difficult and contentious. He said Washington had reacted negatively to Micheletti's antics and that patience was at an end. The Ambassador told Lobo of the latest U.S. position that Micheletti needed to step down no later than January 15. The Ambassador said that, if Micheletti resisted, visas to regime officials would not be restored and that additional visa revocations might be announced. The Ambassador commented that we wanted to be discreet and that the only people we had discussed these instructions had been several members of the Micheletti inner circle, including regime Foreign Minister Carlos Lopez Contreras and Minister of Defense Adolfo Sevilla.

¶3. (S) Lobo responded that Micheletti was an extremely volatile and ill-tempered individual who rarely listened to others. He said that in meetings he had held with the regime leader to encourage him to step down for the good of the country in December and later in January, Micheletti had also

been rude and disrespectful. He pointed out that while Micheletti considered himself a pro-American, he had spent the better part of the past 7 months insulting U.S. officials and criticizing U.S. policy. Lobo underscored that he would continue to work with us to get Micheletti to step down, but he was also prepared to deal with the likelihood that Micheletti would not cooperate, that attendance at his inauguration would be minimal and his diplomatic challenges would be significant.

**¶4. (S) U.S.-Honduran Ties:** The Ambassador stressed that the U.S. looked forward to establishing solid working level ties with his government post-January 27. The U.S. wanted his (Lobo's) government to succeed and we would be ready to reengage in a constructive manner and work the full range of security, economic and development issues. The Ambassador reiterated U.S. support for Lobo's efforts to implement the Tegucigalpa-San Jose Accord principally through the creation of his own government of national unity, and the launch of a Truth Commission. The Ambassador praised Lobo's public message of unity and national reconciliation. The Ambassador added that strengthening democratic institutions, protecting human rights and ensuring civilian control of the military were important tasks. The Ambassador said reaffirming a strong commitment to democracy and adopting sound economic policies were vital to getting Honduras back on a positive path and ensuring that it would be able to restore ties with the international community.

**¶5. (S) Lobo reiterated his goal of being the President of all Hondurans and that unity and national reconciliation were two of his priority tasks.** He said it was a difficult situation due to the extreme polarization in the land and said he found it frustrating that many of his own close supporters within the National Party, as well as right-wing civil society

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groups, were bent on continued confrontation.

**¶6. (S) Political Amnesty:** Lobo said enactment of political amnesty legislation was a key element in promoting national reconciliation. He was hopeful that the draft legislation being considered by the current Congress would be approved during the week of January 11. However, unfortunately the hard right had been lobbying the Micheletti wing of the Liberal Party, including Congress President Alberto Saavedra, not to approve the law, since they believed it would absolve Zelaya and his closest advisors of their misdeeds. Lobo said the Honduran political class had greatly contributed to the Honduran crisis and expressed the view that Zelaya, Micheletti, and the military needed some sort of amnesty. He said if the Micheletti controlled Congress failed to move and enact political amnesty legislation, he would direct the National Party majority in Congress to pass the law very soon after he assumed office. He said he would not be dissuaded by pressure from the hard right.

**¶7. (S) Status of President Zelaya:** Lobo said he hoped that a deal could be worked out for Zelaya to be able to be given safe passage or political exile prior to January 27. He agreed that this was unlikely since Micheletti would only allow Zelaya out of the country if he formally asked for political exile, something Zelaya was reluctant to do. However, if that did not happen he would move quickly to allow Zelaya safe passage out of Honduras. In the event Zelaya did not want to leave Honduras, Lobo said he was committed to providing security for both Zelaya (as well as Micheletti), and ensure that Zelaya was given due process and the right to defend himself of the criminal charges pending and not be covered by the political amnesty statute. Lobo said he believed that what was best for Zelaya and his family was for him to leave the country for several months until political conditions were more appropriate for his return.

LLORENS